GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:526
ANSWERED ON:11.05.2007
VOTER IDENTITY CARDS
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Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some States are still lagging behind in issuing Voter Identity Cards;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the steps taken/ being taken by the Government for the issuing Voter Identity Cards to the eligible citizens in the country:

(d) whether irregularities in preparation of Voter Identity Cards in some States have come to the notice of the Government; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the corrective steps taken by the Government in the matter?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ)

(a) to (e): A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to parts (a) to (e) of the Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 526 for 11.05.2007.

(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Election Commission of India has intimated that while the work of preparation of Electors` Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) has not yet started in Assam, the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland are also lagging behind as compared to other States. A statement showing the current status of issuance of EPICs to electors is enclosed at Annexure. It may be seen that approximately 73% electors in the country have been issued these EPICs.

In Assam, the work of preparation of EPICs started in the first phase during 1993-94 itself alongwith other States / UTs but had to be suspended due to strong protest from various organizations.

The work of preparation of EPIC in Manipur was taken up since 1993 and continued till 1996. Nearly 10 lakh cards were prepared but the exercise had to be abandoned due to certain adverse field conditions and reports of cards being snatched away or destroyed by the underground elements. The work was again resumed in June 2004 but because of intervention from some underground elements, the programme was suspended again.

In Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland also, the desired progress could not be made due to lack of infrastructure and apathy of electors. In Nagaland, the EPIC coverage was approximately 57% prior to intensive revision of electoral rolls w.r.t. 1.1.2005 as the qualifying date. During intensive revision EPICs were not shown by many households to the Enumerators during house-to-house visit. Therefore, the numbers of many Identity Cards could not be captured in the electoral roll database and the percentage of EPIC coverage indicated in the electoral roll database has dropped down to 45.47%.

(c) The States have been directed to take up EPIC campaign vigorously. Another way in which this problem is being addressed is to prepare photo electoral rolls containing the photograph of electors. A pilot project was undertaken in Kerala and Haryana and the results were encouraging. Thereafter, during revision of 2005, electoral rolls of one constituency each of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab; 2 constituencies of Haryana; all the 30 constituencies of Puducherry and all the 140 constituencies of Kerala were published with photographs of electors. The scheme is being gradually extended in other parts of the country. During the 2006 revision, the remaining 88 constituencies of Haryana, 5 more constituencies of Himachal Pradesh, 14 constituencies of Gujarat, 52 constituencies of Rajasthan and 46 constituencies of West Bengal were covered. During the ongoing revision of 2007, all the constituencies comprised within the States/UTs of Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Chandigarh & Lakshadweep and the remaining constituencies of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh shall be covered by photo roll. In addition some States will be partially covered viz. 13 constituencies of Andhra Pradesh, 5 constituencies of Bihar, 5 constituencies of Jharkhand and 95 constituencies of West Bengal. The Commission proposes to cover the entire country with photo roll by the year 2009.

Besides, in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, permanent Voter Registration & Elector`s Photo Identity Card Centre (VREC) are being set up in each of the 70 assembly constituencies for registration in the electoral roll and issuance of EPICs throughout the year. So far, six such Centres have been opened in the NCT of Delhi.

(d) & (e) Cases of issuance of large number of faulty EPICs have not come to the notice of the Commission though cases do occur

where particulars are wrongly written or mismatch of photo takes place but the same are sent for correction by the local officers. A few cases of irregularities in preparation and distribution of voter-Identity Cards have come to the notice of the Commission. In Varanasi District of Uttar Pradesh, EPICs were found in heaps of garbage. The District Election Officer, Varanasi duly inquired into these irregularities. Action against all responsible for the lapse has been initiated. Five Lekhpals have been suspended and disciplinary action has been initiated against 8 Lekhpals. In addition the District Election Officer-cum-DM, Varanasi has ordered proceedings against one Assistant Registrar Kanungo, one Tehsildar and one Deputy District Election Officer.

In Delhi, a case of issuance of EPICs with duplicate unique number to 10,415 electors in 25-Nagloi Jat Assembly Constituency also came to notice. The Govt. of NCT of Delhi has been directed to initiate disciplinary action against the District Election Officer, Electoral Registration Officer and Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Election) concerned.

In Goa, one instance of a person verifying the identity of many persons of different households during preparation of identity cards came to notice. Immediate remedial action was taken to stop recurrence of such incident.